SONGS OF ACTION

Contents:

The Song Of The Bow
Cremona
The Storming Party
The Frontier Line
Corporal Dick's Promotion
A Forgotten Tale
Pennarby Mine
A Rover Chanty
A Ballad Of The Ranks
A Lay Of The Links
The Dying Whip
Master
H.M.S. 'Foudroyant'
The Farnshire Cup
The Groom's Story
With the Chiddingfolds
A Hunting Morning
The Old Gray Fox
'Ware Holes
The Home-coming of the 'Eurydice'
The Inner Room
The Irish Colonel
The Blind Archer

A Parable
A Tragedy
The Passing
The Franklin's Maid
The Old Huntsman

THE SONG OF THE BOW

What of the bow?
  The bow was made in England:
Of true wood, of yew-wood,
  The wood of English bows;
    So men who are free
    Love the old yew-tree
And the land where the yew-tree grows.

What of the cord?
  The cord was made in England:
A rough cord, a tough cord,
  A cord that bowmen love;
    And so we will sing
    Of the hempen string
And the land where the cord was wove.

What of the shaft?
  The shaft was cut in England:
A long shaft, a strong shaft,
  Barbed and trim and true;
    So we'll drink all together
    To the grey goose-feather
And the land where the grey goose flew.

What of the mark?
  Ah, seek it not in England,

A bold mark, our old mark
  Is waiting over-sea.
    When the strings harp in chorus,
    And the lion flag is o'er us,
It is there that our mark will be.

What of the men?
  The men were bred in England:
The bowmen—the yeomen,
  The lads of dale and fell.
    Here's to you—and to you!
    To the hearts that are true
And the land where the true hearts dwell.

CREMONA

[The French Army, including a part of the Irish Brigade, under Marshal Villeroy, held the fortified town of Cremona during the winter of 1702. Prince Eugene, with the Imperial Army, surprised it one morning, and, owing to the treachery of a priest, occupied the whole city before the alarm was given. Villeroy was captured, together with many of the French garrison. The Irish, however, consisting of the regiments of Dillon and of Burke, held a fort commanding the river gate, and defended themselves all day, in spite of Prince Eugene's efforts to win them over to his cause. Eventually Eugene, being unable to take the post, was compelled to withdraw from the city.]

The Grenadiers of Austria are proper men and tall;
The Grenadiers of Austria have scaled the city wall;
  They have marched from far away
  Ere the dawning of the day,
And the morning saw them masters of Cremona.

There's not a man to whisper, there's not a horse to neigh;
Of the footmen of Lorraine and the riders of Dupres,
  They have crept up every street,
  In the market-place they meet,
They are holding every vantage in Cremona.

The Marshal Villeroy he has started from his bed;
The Marshal Villeroy has no wig upon his head;
  'I have lost my men!' quoth he,
  'And my men they have lost me,
And I sorely fear we both have lost Cremona.'

Prince Eugene of Austria is in the market-place;
Prince Eugene of Austria has smiles upon his face;
  Says he, 'Our work is done,
  For the Citadel is won,
And the black and yellow flag flies o'er Cremona.'

Major Dan O'Mahony is in the barrack square,
And just six hundred Irish lads are waiting for him there;
  Says he, 'Come in your shirt,
  And you won't take any hurt,
For the morning air is pleasant in Cremona.'

Major Dan O'Mahony is at the barrack gate,
And just six hundred Irish lads will neither stay nor wait;
  There's Dillon and there's Burke,
  And there'll be some bloody work
Ere the Kaiserlics shall boast they hold Cremona.

Major Dan O'Mahony has reached the river fort,
And just six hundred Irish lads are joining in the sport;
  'Come, take a hand!' says he,
  'And if you will stand by me,
Then it's glory to the man who takes Cremona!'

Prince Eugene of Austria has frowns upon his face,
And loud he calls his Galloper of Irish blood and race:

'MacDonnell, ride, I pray,
To your countrymen, and say
That only they are left in all Cremona!'

MacDonnell he has reined his mare beside the river dyke,
And he has tied the parley flag upon a sergeant's pike;
Six companies were there
From Limerick and Clare,
The last of all the guardians of Cremona.

'Now, Major Dan O'Mahony, give up the river gate,
Or, Major Dan O'Mahony, you'll find it is too late;
For when I gallop back
'Tis the signal for attack,
And no quarter for the Irish in Cremona!'

And Major Dan he laughed: 'Faith, if what you say be true,
And if they will not come until they hear again from you,
Then there will be no attack,
For you're never going back,
And we'll keep you snug and safely in Cremona.'

All the weary day the German stormers came,
All the weary day they were faced by fire and flame,
They have filled the ditch with dead,
And the river's running red;
But they cannot win the gateway of Cremona.

All the weary day, again, again, again,
The horsemen of Dupres and the footmen of Lorraine,
Taafe and Herberstein,
And the riders of the Rhine;
It's a mighty price they're paying for Cremona.

Time and time they came with the deep-mouthed German roar,
Time and time they broke like the wave upon the shore;
For better men were there

From Limerick and Clare,
And who will take the gateway of Cremona?

Prince Eugene has watched, and he gnaws his nether lip;
Prince Eugene has cursed as he saw his chances slip:
'Call off! Call off!' he cried,
'It is nearing eventide,
And I fear our work is finished in Cremona.'

Says Wauchop to McAulliffe, 'Their fire is growing slack.'
Says Major Dan O'Mahony, 'It is their last attack;
But who will stop the game
While there's light to play the same,
And to walk a short way with them from Cremona?'

And so they snarl behind them, and beg them turn and come,
They have taken Neuberg's standard, they have taken Diak's drum;
And along the winding Po,
Beard on shoulder, stern and slow
The Kaiserlics are riding from Cremona.

Just two hundred Irish lads are shouting on the wall;
Four hundred more are lying who can hear no slogan call;
But what's the odds of that,
For it's all the same to Pat
If he pays his debt in Dublin or Cremona.

Says General de Vaudray, 'You've done a soldier's work!
And every tongue in France shall talk of Dillon and of Burke!
Ask what you will this day,
And be it what it may,
It is granted to the heroes of Cremona.'

'Why, then,' says Dan O'Mahony, 'one favour we entreat,
We were called a little early, and our toilet's not complete.
We've no quarrel with the shirt,
But the breeches wouldn't hurt,
For the evening air is chilly in Cremona.'

THE STORMING PARTY

Said Paul Leroy to Barrow,
'Though the breach is steep and narrow,
  If we only gain the summit
    Then it's odds we hold the fort.
I have ten and you have twenty,
And the thirty should be plenty,
With Henderson and Henty
  And McDermott in support.'

Said Barrow to Leroy,
'It's a solid job, my boy,
  For they've flanked it, and they've banked it,
    And they've bored it with a mine.
But it's only fifty paces
Ere we look them in the faces;
And the men are in their places,
  With their toes upon the line.'

Said Paul Leroy to Barrow,
'See that first ray, like an arrow,
  How it tinges all the fringes
    Of the sullen drifting skies.
They told me to begin it
At five-thirty to the minute,
And at thirty-one I'm in it,
  Or my sub will get his rise.

'So we'll wait the signal rocket,
Till . . . Barrow, show that locket,
That turquoise-studded locket,
Which you slipped from out your pocket
    And are pressing with a kiss!
  Turquoise-studded, spiral-twisted,
It is hers! And I had missed it

From her chain; and you have kissed it:
Barrow, villain, what is this?'

'Leroy, I had a warning,
That my time has come this morning,
So I speak with frankness, scorning
To deny the thing that's true.
Yes, it's Amy's, is the trinket,
Little turquoise-studded trinket,
Not her gift—oh, never think it!
For her thoughts were all for you.

'As we danced I gently drew it
From her chain—she never knew it
But I love her—yes, I love her:
I am candid, I confess.
But I never told her, never,
For I knew 'twas vain endeavour,
And she loved you—loved you ever,
Would to God she loved you less!'

'Barrow, Barrow, you shall pay me!
Me, your comrade, to betray me!
Well I know that little Amy
Is as true as wife can be.
She to give this love-badged locket!
She had rather . . . Ha, the rocket!
Hi, McDougall! Sound the bugle!
Yorkshires, Yorkshires, follow me!'

* * *

Said Paul Leroy to Amy,
'Well, wifie, you may blame me,
For my passion overcame me,
When he told me of his shame;
But when I saw him lying,
Dead amid a ring of dying,

Why, poor devil, I was trying
   To forget, and not to blame.

'And this locket, I unclasped it
From the fingers that still grasped it:
He told me how he got it,
   How he stole it in a valse.'
And she listened leaden-hearted:
Oh, the weary day they parted!
For she loved him—yes, she loved him -
For his youth and for his truth,
   And for those dying words, so false.

THE FRONTIER LINE

What marks the frontier line?
   Thou man of India, say!
Is it the Himalayas sheer,
The rocks and valleys of Cashmere,
Or Indus as she seeks the south
From Attoch to the fivefold mouth?
      'Not that! Not that!'
   Then answer me, I pray!
What marks the frontier line?

What marks the frontier line?
   Thou man of Burmah, speak!
Is it traced from Mandalay,
And down the marches of Cathay,
From Bhamo south to Kiang-mai,
And where the buried rubies lie?
      'Not that! Not that!'
   Then tell me what I seek:
What marks the frontier line?

What marks the frontier line?
  Thou Africander, say!
Is it shown by Zulu kraal,
By Drakensberg or winding Vaal,
Or where the Shire waters seek
Their outlet east at Mozambique?
    'Not that! Not that!
  There is a surer way
To mark the frontier line.'

What marks the frontier line?
  Thou man of Egypt, tell!
Is it traced on Luxor's sand,
Where Karnak's painted pillars stand,
Or where the river runs between
The Ethiop and Bishareen?
    'Not that! Not that!
  By neither stream nor well
We mark the frontier line.

'But be it east or west,
  One common sign we bear,
The tongue may change, the soil, the sky,
But where your British brothers lie,
The lonely cairn, the nameless grave,
Still fringe the flowing Saxon wave.
    'Tis that! 'Tis where
  THEY lie—the men who placed it there,
That marks the frontier line.'

CORPORAL DICK'S PROMOTION A BALLAD OF '82

The Eastern day was well-nigh o'er
When, parched with thirst and travel sore,

Two of McPherson's flanking corps
  Across the Desert were tramping.
They had wandered off from the beaten track
And now were wearily harking back,
Ever staring round for the signal jack
  That marked their comrades camping.

The one was Corporal Robert Dick,
Bearded and burly, short and thick,
Rough of speech and in temper quick,
  A hard-faced old rapscallion.
The other, fresh from the barrack square,
Was a raw recruit, smooth-cheeked and fair
Half grown, half drilled, with the weedy air
  Of a draft from the home battalion.

Weary and parched and hunger-torn,
They had wandered on from early morn,
And the young boy-soldier limped forlorn,
  Now stumbling and now falling.
Around the orange sand-curves lay,
Flecked with boulders, black or grey,
Death-silent, save that far away
  A kite was shrilly calling.

A kite? Was THAT a kite? The yell
That shrilly rose and faintly fell?
No kite's, and yet the kite knows well
  The long-drawn wild halloo.
And right athwart the evening sky
The yellow sand-spray spurtled high,
And shrill and shriller swelled the cry
  Of 'Allah! Allahu!'

The Corporal peered at the crimson West,
Hid his pipe in his khaki vest.
Growled out an oath and onward pressed,
  Still glancing over his shoulder.

'Bedouins, mate!' he curtly said;
'We'll find some work for steel and lead,
And maybe sleep in a sandy bed,
  Before we're one hour older.

'But just one flutter before we're done.
Stiffen your lip and stand, my son;
We'll take this bloomin' circus on:
  Ball-cartridge load! Now, steady!'
With a curse and a prayer the two faced round,
Dogged and grim they stood their ground,
And their breech-blocks snapped with a crisp clean sound
  As the rifles sprang to the 'ready.'

Alas for the Emir Ali Khan!
A hundred paces before his clan,
That ebony steed of the prophet's breed
  Is the foal of death and of danger.
A spurt of fire, a gasp of pain,
A blueish blurr on the yellow plain,
The chief was down, and his bridle rein
  Was in the grip of the stranger.

With the light of hope on his rugged face,
The Corporal sprang to the dead man's place,
One prick with the steel, one thrust with the heel,
  And where was the man to outride him?
A grip of his knees, a toss of his rein,
He was settling her down to her gallop again,
When he stopped, for he heard just one faltering word
  From the young recruit beside him.

One faltering word from pal to pal,
But it found the heart of the Corporal.
He had sprung to the sand, he had lent him a hand,
  'Up, mate! They'll be 'ere in a minute;
Off with you! No palaver! Go!
I'll bide be'ind and run this show.

Promotion has been cursed slow,
  And this is my chance to win it.'

Into the saddle he thrust him quick,
Spurred the black mare with a bayonet prick.
Watched her gallop with plunge and with kick
  Away o'er the desert careering.
Then he turned with a softened face,
And loosened the strap of his cartridge-case,
While his thoughts flew back to the dear old place
  In the sunny Hampshire clearing.

The young boy-private, glancing back,
Saw the Bedouins' wild attack,
And heard the sharp Martini crack.
  But as he gazed, already
The fierce fanatic Arab band
Was closing in on every hand,
Until one tawny swirl of sand,
  Concealed them in its eddy.

* * *

A squadron of British horse that night,
Galloping hard in the shadowy light,
Came on the scene of that last stern fight,
  And found the Corporal lying
Silent and grim on the trampled sand,
His rifle grasped in his stiffened hand,
With the warrior pride of one who died
  'Mid a ring of the dead and the dying.

And still when twilight shadows fall,
After the evening bugle call,
In bivouac or in barrack-hall,
His comrades speak of the Corporal,
  His death and his devotion.
And there are some who like to say

That perhaps a hidden meaning lay
In the words he spoke, and that the day
When his rough bold spirit passed away
  WAS the day that he won promotion.

A FORGOTTEN TALE

[The scene of this ancient fight, recorded by Froissart, is still called 'Altura de los Inglesos.' Five hundred years later Wellington's soldiers were fighting on the same ground.]

'Say, what saw you on the hill,
  Campesino Garcia?'
'I saw my brindled heifer there,
A trail of bowmen, spent and bare,
And a little man on a sorrel mare
  Riding slow before them.'

'Say, what saw you in the vale,
  Campesino Garcia?'
'There I saw my lambing ewe
And an army riding through,
Thick and brave the pennons flew
  From the lances o'er them.'

'Then what saw you on the hill,
  Campesino Garcia?'
'I saw beside the milking byre,
White with want and black with mire,
The little man with eyes afire
  Marshalling his bowmen.'

'Then what saw you in the vale,
  Campesino Garcia?'

'There I saw my bullocks twain,
And amid my uncut grain
All the hardy men of Spain
  Spurring for their foemen.'

'Nay, but there is more to tell,
  Campesino Garcia!'
'I could not bide the end to view;
I had graver things to do
Tending on the lambing ewe
  Down among the clover.'

'Ah, but tell me what you heard,
  Campesino Garcia!'
'Shouting from the mountain-side,
Shouting until eventide;
But it dwindled and it died
  Ere milking time was over.'

'Nay, but saw you nothing more,
  Campesino Garcia?'
'Yes, I saw them lying there,
The little man and sorrel mare;
And in their ranks the bowmen fair,
  With their staves before them.'

'And the hardy men of Spain,
  Campesino Garcia?'
'Hush! but we are Spanish too;
More I may not say to you:
May God's benison, like dew,
  Gently settle o'er them.'

PENNARBY MINE

Pennarby shaft is dark and steep,
Eight foot wide, eight hundred deep.
Stout the bucket and tough the cord,
Strong as the arm of Winchman Ford.
  'Never look down!
  Stick to the line!'
That was the saying at Pennarby mine.

A stranger came to Pennarby shaft.
Lord, to see how the miners laughed!
White in the collar and stiff in the hat,
With his patent boots and his silk cravat,
  Picking his way,
  Dainty and fine,
Stepping on tiptoe to Pennarby mine.

Touring from London, so he said.
Was it copper they dug for? or gold? or lead?
Where did they find it? How did it come?
If he tried with a shovel might HE get some?
  Stooping so much
  Was bad for the spine;
And wasn't it warmish in Pennarby mine?

'Twas like two worlds that met that day -
The world of work and the world of play;
And the grimy lads from the reeking shaft
Nudged each other and grinned and chaffed.
  'Got 'em all out!'
  'A cousin of mine!'
So ran the banter at Pennarby mine.

And Carnbrae Bob, the Pennarby wit,
Told him the facts about the pit:
How they bored the shaft till the brimstone smell
Warned them off from tapping—well,
  He wouldn't say what,

But they took it as sign
To dig no deeper in Pennarby mine.

Then leaning over and peering in,
He was pointing out what he said was tin
In the ten-foot lode—a crash! a jar!
A grasping hand and a splintered bar.
Gone in his strength,
With the lips that laughed -
Oh, the pale faces round Pennarby shaft!

Far down on a narrow ledge,
They saw him cling to the crumbling edge.
'Wait for the bucket! Hi, man! Stay!
That rope ain't safe! It's worn away!
He's taking his chance,
Slack out the line!
Sweet Lord be with him!' cried Pennarby mine.

'He's got him! He has him! Pull with a will!
Thank God! He's over and breathing still.
And he—Lord's sakes now! What's that? Well!
Blowed if it ain't our London swell.
Your heart is right
If your coat IS fine:
Give us your hand!' cried Pennarby mine.

A ROVER CHANTY

A trader sailed from Stepney town -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the mainsail!
A trader sailed from Stepney town
With a keg full of gold and a velvet gown:
Ho, the bully rover Jack,

Waiting with his yard aback
Out upon the Lowland sea!

The trader he had a daughter fair -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the foresail
The trader he had a daughter fair,
She had gold in her ears, and gold in her hair:
All for bully rover Jack,
Waiting with his yard aback,
Out upon the Lowland sea!

'Alas the day, oh daughter mine!' -
Shake her up! Wake her up! Try her with the topsail!
'Alas the day, oh daughter mine!
Yon red, red flag is a fearsome sign!'
Ho, the bully rover Jack,
Reaching on the weather tack,
Out upon the Lowland sea!

'A fearsome flag!' the maiden cried -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the jibsail!
'A fearsome flag!' the maiden cried,
But comelier men I never have spied!'
Ho, the bully rover Jack,
Reaching on the weather tack,
Out upon the Lowland sea!

There's a wooden path that the rovers know -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Try her with the headsails!
There's a wooden path that the rovers know,
Where none come back, though many must go:
Ho, the bully rover Jack,
Lying with his yard aback,
Out upon the Lowland sea!

Where is the trader of Stepney town? -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Every stick a-bending!
Where is the trader of Stepney town?

There's gold on the capstan, and blood on the gown:
  Ho for bully rover Jack,
  Waiting with his yard aback,
Out upon the Lowland sea!

Where is the maiden who knelt at his side? -
Wake her up! Shake her up! Every stitch a-drawing!
Where is the maiden who knelt at his side?
We gowned her in scarlet, and chose her our bride:
  Ho, the bully rover Jack,
  Reaching on the weather tack,
Right across the Lowland sea!

So it's up and its over to Stornoway Bay,
Pack it on! Crack it on! Try her with the stunsails!
It's off on a bowline to Stornoway Bay,
Where the liquor is good and the lasses are gay:
  Waiting for their bully Jack,
  Watching for him sailing back,
Right across the Lowland sea.

A BALLAD OF THE RANKS

Who carries the gun?
  A lad from over the Tweed.
Then let him go, for well we know
  He comes of a soldier breed.
So drink together to rock and heather,
  Out where the red deer run,
And stand aside for Scotland's pride -
  The man that carries the gun!
    For the Colonel rides before,
      The Major's on the flank,
    The Captains and the Adjutant

Are in the foremost rank.
But when it's 'Action front!'
And fighting's to be done,
Come one, come all, you stand or fall
By the man who holds the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from a Yorkshire dale.
Then let him go, for well we know
The heart that never will fail.
Here's to the fire of Lancashire,
And here's to her soldier son!
For the hard-bit north has sent him forth -
The lad that carries the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from a Midland shire.
Then let him go, for well we know
He comes of an English sire.
Here's a glass to a Midland lass,
And each can choose the one,
But east and west we claim the best
For the man that carries the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from the hills of Wales.
Then let him go, for well we know,
That Taffy is hard as nails.
There are several ll's in the place where he dwells,
And of w's more than one,
With a 'Llan' and a 'pen,' but it breeds good men,
And it's they who carry the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from the windy west.
Then let him go, for well we know
That he is one of the best.
There's Bristol rough, and Gloucester tough,

And Devon yields to none.
Or you may get in Somerset
Your lad to carry the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from London town.
Then let him go, for well we know
The stuff that never backs down.
He has learned to joke at the powder smoke,
For he is the fog-smoke's son,
And his heart is light and his pluck is right -
The man who carries the gun.

Who carries the gun?
A lad from the Emerald Isle.
Then let him go, for well we know,
We've tried him many a while.
We've tried him east, we've tried him west,
We've tried him sea and land,
But the man to beat old Erin's best
Has never yet been planned.

Who carries the gun?
It's you, and you, and you;
So let us go, and we won't say no
If they give us a job to do.
Here we stand with a cross-linked hand,
Comrades every one;
So one last cup, and drink it up
To the man who carries the gun!
For the Colonel rides before,
The Major's on the flank,
The Captains and the Adjutant
Are in the foremost rank.
And when it's 'Action front!'
And there's fighting to be done,

Come one, come all, you stand or fall
By the man who holds the gun.

A LAY OF THE LINKS

It's up and away from our work to-day,
For the breeze sweeps over the down;
And it's hey for a game where the gorse blossoms flame,
And the bracken is bronzing to brown.
With the turf 'neath our tread and the blue overhead,
And the song of the lark in the whin;
There's the flag and the green, with the bunkers between -
Now will you be over or in?

The doctor may come, and we'll teach him to know
A tee where no tannin can lurk;
The soldier may come, and we'll promise to show
Some hazards a soldier may shirk;
The statesman may joke, as he tops every stroke,
That at last he is high in his aims;
And the clubman will stand with a club in his hand
That is worth every club in St. James'.

The palm and the leather come rarely together,
Gripping the driver's haft,
And it's good to feel the jar of the steel
And the spring of the hickory shaft.
Why trouble or seek for the praise of a clique?
A cleek here is common to all;
And the lie that might sting is a very small thing
When compared with the lie of the ball.

Come youth and come age, from the study or stage,
From Bar or from Bench—high and low!

A green you must use as a cure for the blues -
   You drive them away as you go.
We're outward bound on a long, long round,
   And it's time to be up and away:
If worry and sorrow come back with the morrow,
   At least we'll be happy to-day.

THE DYING WHIP

It came from gettin' 'eated, that was 'ow the thing begun,
And 'ackin' back to kennels from a ninety-minute run;
'I guess I've copped brownchitis,' says I to brother Jack,
An' then afore I knowed it I was down upon my back.

At night there came a sweatin' as left me deadly weak,
And my throat was sort of tickly an' it 'urt me for to speak;
An' then there came an 'ackin' cough as wouldn't leave alone,
An' then afore I knowed it I was only skin and bone

I never was a 'eavy weight. I scaled at seven four,
An' rode at eight, or maybe at just a trifle more;
And now I'll stake my davy I wouldn't scale at five,
And I'd 'old my own at catch-weights with the skinniest jock alive.

And the doctor says the reason why I sit an' cough an wheeze
Is all along o' varmint, like the cheese-mites in the cheese;
The smallest kind o' varmint, but varmint all the same,
Microscopes or somethin'—I forget the varmints' name.

But I knows as I'm a goner. They never said as much,
But I reads the people's faces, and I knows as I am such;
Well, there's 'Urst to mind the 'orses and the 'ounds can look to Jack,
Though 'e never was a patch on me in 'andlin' of a pack.

You'll maybe think I'm boastin', but you'll find they all agree
That there's not a whip in Surrey as can 'andle 'ounds like me;
For I knew 'em all from puppies, and I'd tell 'em without fail -
If I seed a tail a-waggin', I could tell who wagged the tail.

And voices—why, Lor' love you, it's more than I can 'elp,
It just comes kind of natural to know each whine an' yelp;
You might take them twenty couple where you will and let 'em run,
An' I'd listen by the coverside and name 'em one by one.

I say it's kind of natural, for since I was a brat
I never cared for readin' books, or fancy things like that;
But give me 'ounds and 'orses an' I was quite content,
An' I loved to ear 'em talkin' and to wonder what they meant.

And when the 'ydrophoby came five year ago next May,
When Nailer was be'avin' in a most owdacious way,
I fixed 'im so's 'e couldn't bite, my 'ands on neck an' back,
An' I 'eaved 'im from the kennels, and they say I saved the pack.

An' when the Master 'eard of it, 'e up an' says, says 'e,
'If that chap were a soldier man, they'd give 'im the V.C.'
Which is some kind a' medal what they give to soldier men;
An' Master said if I were such I would 'a' got it then.

Parson brought 'is Bible and come to read to me;
"Ave what you like, there's everythink within this Book,' says 'e.
Says I, 'They've left the 'orses out!' Says 'e, 'You are mistook;'
An' 'e up an' read a 'eap of things about them from the Book.

And some of it amazin' fine; although I'm fit to swear
No 'orse would ever say 'Ah, ah!' same as they said it there.
Per'aps it was an 'Ebrew 'orse the chap 'ad in his mind,
But I never 'eard an English 'orse say nothin' of the kind.

Parson is a good 'un. I've known 'im from a lad;
'Twas me as taught 'im ridin', an' 'e rides uncommon bad;

And he says—But 'ark an' listen! There's an 'orn! I 'eard it blow;
Pull the blind from off the winder! Prop me up, and 'old me so.

They're drawin' the black 'anger, just aside the Squire's grounds.
'Ark and listen! 'Ark and listen! There's the yappin' of the
'ounds:
There's Fanny and Beltinker, and I 'ear old Boxer call;
You see I wasn't boastin' when I said I knew 'em all.

Let me sit an' 'old the bedrail! Now I see 'em as they pass:
There's Squire upon the Midland mare, a good 'un on the grass;
But this is closish country, and you wants a clever 'orse
When 'alf the time you're in the woods an' 'alf among the gorse.

'Ark to Jack a'ollering—a-bleatin' like a lamb.
You wouldn't think it now, perhaps, to see the thing I am;
But there was a time the ladies used to linger at the meet
Just to 'ear me callin' in the woods: my callin' was so sweet.

I see the crossroads corner, with the field awaitin' there,
There's Purcell on 'is piebald 'orse, an' Doctor on the mare,
And the Master on 'is iron grey; she isn't much to look,
But I seed 'er do clean twenty foot across the 'eathly brook.

There's Captain Kane an' McIntyre an' 'alf a dozen more,
And two or three are 'untin' whom I never seed afore;
Likely-lookin' chaps they be, well groomed and 'orsed and dressed -
I wish they could 'a seen the pack when it was at its best.

It's a check, and they are drawin' down the coppice for a scent,
You can see as they've been runnin', for the 'orses they are spent;
I'll lay the fox will break this way, downwind as sure as fate,
An' if he does you'll see the field come poundin' through our gate.

But, Maggie, what's that slinkin' beside the cover?—See!
Now it's in the clover field, and goin' fast an' free,
It's 'im, and they don't see 'im. It's 'im! 'Alloo! 'Alloo!
My broken wind won't run to it—I'll leave the job to you.

There now I 'ear the music, and I know they're on his track;
Oh, watch 'em, Maggie, watch 'em! Ain't they just a lovely pack!
I've nursed 'em through distemper, an' I've trained an' broke 'em in,
An' my 'eart it just goes out to them as if they was my kin.

Well, all things 'as an endin', as I've 'eard the parson say,
The 'orse is cast, an' the 'ound is past, an' the 'unter 'as 'is day;
But my day was yesterday, so lay me down again.
You can draw the curtain, Maggie, right across the winder pane.

MASTER

Master went a-hunting,
When the leaves were falling;
Master went a-hunting,
When the leaves were falling;
We saw him on the bridle path,
We heard him gaily calling.
'Oh master, master, come you back,
For I have dreamed a dream so black!'
A glint of steel from bit and heel,
The chestnut cantered faster;
A red flash seen amid the green,
And so good-bye to master.

Master came from hunting,
Two silent comrades bore him;
His eyes were dim, his face was white,
The mare was led before him.
'Oh, master, master, is it thus
That you have come again to us?'
I held my lady's ice-cold hand,
They bore the hurdle past her;
Why should they go so soft and slow?
It matters not to master.

H.M.S. 'FOUDROYANT'

[Being an humble address to Her Majesty's Naval advisers, who sold Nelson's old flagship to the Germans for a thousand pounds.]

Who says the Nation's purse is lean,
  Who fears for claim or bond or debt,
When all the glories that have been
  Are scheduled as a cash asset?
If times are black and trade is slack,
  If coal and cotton fail at last,
We've something left to barter yet -
    Our glorious past.

There's many a crypt in which lies hid
  The dust of statesman or of king;
There's Shakespeare's home to raise a bid,
  And Milton's house its price would bring.
What for the sword that Cromwell drew?
  What for Prince Edward's coat of mail?
What for our Saxon Alfred's tomb?
    They're all for sale!

And stone and marble may be sold
  Which serve no present daily need;
There's Edward's Windsor, labelled old,
  And Wolsey's palace, guaranteed.
St. Clement Danes and fifty fanes,
  The Tower and the Temple grounds;
How much for these? Just price them, please,
    In British pounds.

You hucksters, have you still to learn,
  The things which money will not buy?
Can you not read that, cold and stern
  As we may be, there still does lie

Deep in our hearts a hungry love
  For what concerns our island story?
We sell our work—perchance our lives,
    But not our glory.

Go barter to the knacker's yard
  The steed that has outlived its time!
Send hungry to the pauper ward
  The man who served you in his prime!
But when you touch the Nation's store,
  Be broad your mind and tight your grip.
Take heed! And bring us back once more
    Our Nelson's ship.

And if no mooring can be found
  In all our harbours near or far,
Then tow the old three-decker round
  To where the deep-sea soundings are;
There, with her pennon flying clear,
  And with her ensign lashed peak high,
Sink her a thousand fathoms sheer.
    There let her lie!

THE FARNSHIRE CUP

Christopher Davis was up upon Mavis
  And Sammy MacGregor on Flo,
Jo Chauncy rode Spider, the rankest outsider,
  But HE'D make a wooden horse go.
There was Robin and Leah and Boadicea,
  And Chesterfield's Son of the Sea;
And Irish Nuneaton, who never was beaten,
  They backed her at seven to three.

The course was the devil! A start on the level,
  And then a stiff breather uphill;
A bank at the top with a four-foot drop,
  And a bullfinch down by the mill.
A stretch of straight from the Whittlesea gate,
  Then up and down and up;
And the mounts that stay through Farnshire clay
  May bid for the Farnshire Cup.

The tipsters were touting, the bookies were shouting
  'Bar one, bar one, bar one!'
With a glint and a glimmer of silken shimmer
  The field shone bright in the sun,
When Farmer Brown came riding down:
  'I hain't much time to spare,
But I've entered her name, so I'll play out the game,
  On the back o' my old gray mare.

'You never would think 'er a thoroughbred clinker,
  There's never a judge that would;
Each leg be'ind 'as a splint, you'll find,
  And the fore are none too good.
She roars a bit, and she don't look fit,
  She's moulted 'alf 'er 'air;
But—' He smiled in a way that seemed to say,
  That he knew that old gray mare.

And the bookies laughed and the bookies chaffed,
  'Who backs the mare?' cried they.
'A hundred to one!' 'It's done—and done!'
  'We'll take that price all day.'
'What if the mare is shedding hair!
  What if her eye is wild!
We read her worth and her pedigree birth
  In the smile that her owner smiled.'

And the whisper grew and the whisper flew
  That she came of Isonomy stock.

'Fifty to one!' 'It's done—and done!
  Look at her haunch and hock!
Ill-groomed! Why yes, but one may guess
  That that is her owner's guile.'
Ah, Farmer Brown, the sharps from town,
  Have read your simple smile!

They've weighed him in. 'Now lose or win,
  I've money at stake this day;
Gee-long, my sweet, and if we're beat,
  We'll both do all we may!'
He joins the rest, they line abreast,
  'Back Leah! Mavis up!'
The flag is dipped and the field is slipped,
  Full split for the Farnshire Cup.

Christopher Davis is leading on Mavis,
  Spider is waiting on Flo;
Boadicea is gaining on Leah,
  Irish Nuneaton lies low;
Robin is tailing, his wind has been failing,
  Son of the Sea's going fast:
So crack on the pace for it's anyone's race,
  And the winner's the horse that can last.

Chestnut and bay, and sorrel and gray,
  See how they glimmer and gleam!
Bending and straining, and losing and gaining,
  Silk jackets flutter and stream;
They are over the grass as the cloud shadows pass,
  They are up to the fence at the top;
It's 'hey then!' and over, and into the clover,
  There wasn't one slip at the drop.

They are all going still; they are round by the mill,
  They are down by the Whittlesea gate;
Leah's complaining, and Mavis is gaining,
  And Flo's catching up in the straight.

Robin's gone wrong, but the Spider runs strong,
  He sticks to the leader like wax;
An utter outsider, but look at his rider -
  Jo Chauncy, the pick of the cracks!

Robin was tailing and pecked at a paling,
  Leah's gone weak in her feet;
Boadicea came down at the railing,
  Son of the Sea is dead beat.
Leather to leather, they're pounding together,
  Three of them all in a row;
And Irish Nuneaton, who never was beaten,
  Is level with Spider and Flo.

It's into the straight from the Whittlesea gate,
  Clean galloping over the green,
But four foot high the hurdles lie
  With a sunken ditch between.
'Tis a bit of a test for a beast at its best,
  And the devil and all at its worst;
But it's clear run in with the Cup to win
  For the horse that is over it first.

So try it, my beauties, and fly it, my beauties,
  Spider, Nuneaton, and Flo;
With a trip and a blunder there's one of them under,
  Hark to it crashing below!
Is it the brown or the sorrel that's down?
  The brown! It is Flo who is in!
And Spider with Chauncy, the pick of the fancy,
  Is going full split for a win.

'Spider is winning!' 'Jo Chauncy is winning!'
  'He's winning! He's winning! Bravo!'
The bookies are raving, the ladies are waving,
  The Stand is all shouting for Jo.
The horse is clean done, but the race may be won
  By the Newmarket lad on his back;

For the fire of the rider may bring an outsider
  Ahead of a thoroughbred crack.

'Spider is winning!' 'Jo Chauncy is winning!'
  It swells like the roar of the sea;
But Jo hears the drumming of somebody coming,
  And sees a lean head by his knee.
'Nuneaton! Nuneaton! The Spider is beaten!'
  It is but a spurt at the most;
For lose it or win it, they have but a minute
  Before they are up with the post.

Nuneaton is straining, Nuneaton is gaining,
  Neither will falter nor flinch;
Whips they are plying and jackets are flying,
  They're fairly abreast to an inch.
'Crack em up! Let 'em go! Well ridden! Bravo!'
  Gamer ones never were bred;
Jo Chauncy has done it! He's spurted! He's won it!'
  The favourite's beat by a head!

Don't tell me of luck, for its judgment and pluck
  And a courage that never will shirk;
To give your mind to it and know how to do it
  And put all your heart in your work.
So here's to the Spider, the winning outsider,
  With little Jo Chauncy up;
May they stay life's course, both jockey and horse,
  As they stayed in the Farnshire Cup.

But it's possible that you are wondering what
  May have happened to Farmer Brown,
And the old gray crock of Isonomy stock
  Who was backed by the sharps from town.
She blew and she sneezed, she coughed and she wheezed,
  She ran till her knees gave way.
But never a grumble at trip or at stumble
  Was heard from her jock that day.

For somebody laid AGAINST the gray,
  And somebody made a pile;
And Brown says he can make farming pay,
  And he smiles a simple smile.
'Them sharps from town were riled,' says Brown;
  'But I can't see why—can you?
For I said quite fair as I knew that mare,
  And I proved my words was true.'

THE GROOM'S STORY

Ten mile in twenty minutes! 'E done it, sir. That's true.
The big bay 'orse in the further stall—the one wot's next to you.
I've seen some better 'orses; I've seldom seen a wuss,
But 'e 'olds the bloomin' record, an' that's good enough for us.

We knew as it wa's in 'im. 'E's thoroughbred, three part,
We bought 'im for to race 'im, but we found 'e 'ad no 'eart;
For 'e was sad and thoughtful, and amazin' dignified,
It seemed a kind o' liberty to drive 'im or to ride;

For 'e never seemed a-thinkin' of what 'e 'ad to do,
But 'is thoughts was set on 'igher things, admirin' of the view.
'E looked a puffeck pictur, and a pictur 'e would stay,
'E wouldn't even switch 'is tail to drive the flies away.

And yet we knew 'twas in 'im, we knew as 'e could fly;
But what we couldn't git at was 'ow to make 'im try.
We'd almost turned the job up, until at last one day
We got the last yard out of 'im in a most amazin' way.

It was all along o' master; which master 'as the name
Of a reg'lar true blue sportman, an' always acts the same;

But we all 'as weaker moments, which master 'e 'ad one,
An' 'e went and bought a motor-car when motor-cars begun.

I seed it in the stable yard—it fairly turned me sick -
A greasy, wheezy engine as can neither buck nor kick.
You've a screw to drive it forrard, and a screw to make it stop,
For it was foaled in a smithy stove an' bred in a blacksmith shop.

It didn't want no stable, it didn't ask no groom,
It didn't need no nothin' but a bit o' standin' room.
Just fill it up with paraffin an' it would go all day,
Which the same should be agin the law if I could 'ave my way.

Well, master took 'is motor-car, an' moted 'ere an' there,
A frightenin' the 'orses an' a poisonin' the air.
'E wore a bloomin' yachtin' cap, but Lor'! wot DID 'e know,
Excep' that if you turn a screw the thing would stop or go?

An' then one day it wouldn't go. 'E screwed and screwed again,
But somethin' jammed, an' there 'e stuck in the mud of a country lane.
It 'urt 'is pride most cruel, but what was 'e to do?
So at last 'e bade me fetch a 'orse to pull the motor through.

This was the 'orse we fetched 'im; an' when we reached the car,
We braced 'im tight and proper to the middle of the bar,
And buckled up 'is traces and lashed them to each side,
While 'e 'eld 'is 'ead so 'aughtily, an' looked most dignified.

Not bad tempered, mind you, but kind of pained and vexed,
And 'e seemed to say, 'Well, bli' me! wot WILL they ask me next?
I've put up with some liberties, but this caps all by far,
To be assistant engine to a crocky motor-car!'

Well, master 'e was in the car, a-fiddlin' with the gear,
And the 'orse was meditatin', an' I was standin' near,
When master 'e touched somethin'—what it was we'll never know -
But it sort o' spurred the boiler up and made the engine go.

"Old 'ard, old gal!' says master, and 'Gently then!' says I,
But an engine won't 'eed coaxin' an' it ain't no use to try;
So first 'e pulled a lever, an' then 'e turned a screw,
But the thing kept crawlin' forrard spite of all that 'e could do.

And first it went quite slowly and the 'orse went also slow,
But 'e 'ad to buck up faster when the wheels began to go;
For the car kept crowdin' on 'im and buttin' 'im along,
And in less than 'alf a minute, sir, that 'orse was goin' strong.

At first 'e walked quite dignified, an' then 'e 'ad to trot,
And then 'e tried a canter when the pace became too 'ot.
'E looked 'is very 'aughtiest, as if 'e didn't 'e mind,
And all the time the motor-car was pushin' 'im be'ind.

Now, master lost 'is 'ead when 'e found 'e couldn't stop,
And 'e pulled a valve or somethin' an' somethin' else went pop,
An' somethin' else went fizzywiz, and in a flash, or less,
That blessed car was goin' like a limited express.

Master 'eld the steerin' gear, an' kept the road all right,
And away they whizzed and clattered—my aunt! it was a sight.
'E seemed the finest draught 'orse as ever lived by far,
For all the country Juggins thought 'twas 'im wot pulled the car.

'E was stretchin' like a grey'ound, 'e was goin' all 'e knew;
But it bumped an' shoved be'ind 'im, for all that 'e could do;
It butted 'im an' boosted 'im an' spanked 'im on a'ead,
Till 'e broke the ten-mile record, same as I already said.

Ten mile in twenty minutes! 'E done it, sir. That's true.
The only time we ever found what that 'ere 'orse could do.
Some say it wasn't 'ardly fair, and the papers made a fuss,
But 'e broke the ten-mile record, and that's good enough for us.

You see that 'orse's tail, sir? You don't! No more do we,
Which really ain't surprisin', for 'e 'as no tail to see;

That engine wore it off 'im before master made it stop,
And all the road was littered like a bloomin' barber's shop.

And master? Well, it cured 'im. 'E altered from that day,
And come back to 'is 'orses in the good old-fashioned way.
And if you wants to git the sack, the quickest way by far
Is to 'int as 'ow you think 'e ought to keep a motor-car.

WITH THE CHIDDINGFOLDS

The horse is bedded down
  Where the straw lies deep.
The hound is in the kennel;
  Let the poor hound sleep!
And the fox is in the spinney
  By the run which he is haunting,
And I'll lay an even guinea
  That a goose or two is wanting
When the farmer comes to count them in the morning.

The horse is up and saddled;
  Girth the old horse tight!
The hounds are out and drawing
  In the morning light.
Now it's 'Yoick!' among the heather,
  And it's 'Yoick!' across the clover,
And it's 'To him, all together!'
  'Hyke a Bertha! Hyke a Rover!'
And the woodlands smell so sweetly in the morning.

'There's Termagant a-whimpering;
  She whimpers so.'
'There's a young hound yapping!'
  Let the young hound go!

But the old hound is cunning,
And it's him we mean to follow,
'They are running! They are running!
And it's 'Forrard to the hollo!'
For the scent is lying strongly in the morning.

'Who's the fool that heads him?'
Hold hard, and let him pass!
He's out among the oziers
He's clear upon the grass.
You grip his flanks and settle,
For the horse is stretched and straining,
Here's a game to test your mettle,
And a sport to try your training,
When the Chiddingfolds are running in the morning.

We're up by the Coppice
And we're down by the Mill,
We're out upon the Common,
And the hounds are running still.
You must tighten on the leather,
For we blunder through the bracken;
Though you're over hocks in heather
Still the pace must never slacken
As we race through Thursley Common in the morning.

We are breaking from the tangle
We are out upon the green,
There's a bank and a hurdle
With a quickset between.
You must steady him and try it,
You are over with a scramble.
Here's a wattle! You must fly it,
And you land among the bramble,
For it's roughish, toughish going in the morning.

'Ware the bog by the Grove
As you pound through the slush.

See the whip! See the huntsman!
We are close upon his brush.
'Ware the root that lies before you!
It will trip you if you blunder.
'Ware the branch that's drooping o'er you!
You must dip and swerve from under
As you gallop through the woodland in the morning.

There were fifty at the find,
There were forty at the mill,
There were twenty on the heath,
And ten are going still.
Some are pounded, some are shirking,
And they dwindle and diminish
Till a weary pair are working,
Spent and blowing, to the finish,
And we hear the shrill whoo-ooping in the morning.

The horse is bedded down
Where the straw lies deep,
The hound is in the kennel,
He is yapping in his sleep.
But the fox is in the spinney
Lying snug in earth and burrow.
And I'll lay an even guinea
We could find again to-morrow,
If we chose to go a-hunting in the morning.

A HUNTING MORNING

Put the saddle on the mare,
For the wet winds blow;
There's winter in the air,
And autumn all below.

For the red leaves are flying
And the red bracken dying,
And the red fox lying
  Where the oziers grow.

Put the bridle on the mare,
  For my blood runs chill;
And my heart, it is there,
  On the heather-tufted hill,
With the gray skies o'er us,
And the long-drawn chorus
Of a running pack before us
  From the find to the kill.

Then lead round the mare,
  For it's time that we began,
And away with thought and care,
  Save to live and be a man,
While the keen air is blowing,
And the huntsman holloing,
And the black mare going
  As the black mare can.

THE OLD GRAY FOX

We started from the Valley Pride,
  And Farnham way we went.
We waited at the cover-side,
  But never found a scent.
Then we tried the withy beds
  Which grow by Frensham town,
And there we found the old gray fox,
    The same old fox,
    The game old fox;

Yes, there we found the old gray fox,
Which lives on Hankley Down.
So here's to the master,
And here's to the man!
And here's to twenty couple
Of the white and black and tan!
Here's a find without a wait!
Here's a hedge without a gate!
Here's the man who follows straight,
Where the old fox ran.

The Member rode his thoroughbred,
Doctor had the gray,
The Soldier led on a roan red,
The Sailor rode the bay.
Squire was there on his Irish mare,
And Parson on the brown;
And so we chased the old gray fox,
The same old fox,
The game old fox,
And so we chased the old gray fox
Across the Hankley Down.
So here's to the master,
And here's to the man!
&c. &c. &c.

The Doctor's gray was going strong
Until she slipped and fell;
He had to keep his bed so long
His patients all got well.
The Member he had lost his seat,
'Twas carried by his horse;
And so we chased the old gray fox,
The same old fox,
The game old fox;
And so we chased the old gray fox
That earthed in Hankley Gorse.

So here's to the master,
And here's to the man!
&c. &c. &c.

The Parson sadly fell away,
And in the furze did lie;
The words we heard that Parson say
Made all the horses shy!
The Sailor he was seen no more
Upon that stormy bay;
But still we chased the old gray fox,
The same old fox,
The game old fox;
Still we chased the old gray fox
Through all the winter day.
So here's to the master,
And here's to the man!
&c. &c. &c.

And when we found him gone to ground,
They sent for spade and man;
But Squire said 'Shame! The beast was game!
A gamer never ran!
His wind and pace have gained the race,
His life is fairly won.
But may we meet the old gray fox,
The same old fox,
The game old fox;
May we meet the old gray fox
Before the year is done.
So here's to the master,
And here's to the man!
And here's to twenty couple
Of the white and black and tan!
Here's a find without await!
Here's a hedge without a gate!

Here's the man who follows straight,
Where the old fox ran.

'WARE HOLES

["Ware Holes!' is the expression used in the hunting-field to warn those behind against rabbit-burrows or other suck dangers.]

A sportin' death! My word it was!
An' taken in a sportin' way.
Mind you, I wasn't there to see;
I only tell you what they say.

They found that day at Shillinglee,
An' ran 'im down to Chillinghurst;
The fox was goin' straight an' free
For ninety minutes at a burst.

They 'ad a check at Ebernoe
An' made a cast across the Down,
Until they got a view 'ullo
An' chased 'im up to Kirdford town.

From Kirdford 'e run Bramber way,
An' took 'em over 'alf the Weald.
If you 'ave tried the Sussex clay,
You'll guess it weeded out the field.

Until at last I don't suppose
As 'arf a dozen, at the most,
Came safe to where the grassland goes
Switchbackin' southwards to the coast.

Young Captain 'Eadley, 'e was there,
   And Jim the whip an' Percy Day;
The Purcells an' Sir Charles Adair,
   An' this 'ere gent from London way.

For 'e 'ad gone amazin' fine,
   Two 'undred pounds between 'is knees;
Eight stone he was, an' rode at nine,
   As light an' limber as you please.

'E was a stranger to the 'Unt,
   There weren't a person as 'e knew there;
But 'e could ride, that London gent -
   'E sat 'is mare as if 'e grew there.

They seed the 'ounds upon the scent,
   But found a fence across their track,
And 'ad to fly it; else it meant
   A turnin' and a 'arkin' back.

'E was the foremost at the fence,
   And as 'is mare just cleared the rail
He turned to them that rode be'ind,
   For three was at 'is very tail.

"Ware 'oles!' says 'e, an' with the word,
   Still sittin' easy on his mare,
Down, down 'e went, an' down an' down,
   Into the quarry yawnin' there.

Some say it was two 'undred foot;
   The bottom lay as black as ink.
I guess they 'ad some ugly dreams,
   Who reined their 'orses on the brink.

'E'd only time for that one cry;
   "Ware 'oles!' says 'e, an' saves all three.

There may be better deaths to die,
  But that one's good enough for me.

For mind you, 'twas a sportin' end,
  Upon a right good sportin' day;
They think a deal of 'im down 'ere,
  That gent what came from London way.

THE HOME-COMING OF THE 'EURYDICE'

[Lost, with her crew of three hundred boys, on the last day of her voyage, March 23, 1876. She foundered off Portsmouth, from which town many of the boys came.]

Up with the royals that top the white spread of her!
  Press her and dress her, and drive through the foam;
The Island's to port, and the mainland ahead of her,
  Hey for the Warner and Hayling and Home!

Bo'sun, O Bo'sun, just look at the green of it!
  Look at the red cattle down by the hedge!
Look at the farmsteading—all that is seen of it,
  One little gable end over the edge!'

'Lord! the tongues of them clattering, clattering,
  All growing wild at a peep of the Wight;
Aye, sir, aye, it has set them all chattering,
  Thinking of home and their mothers to-night.'

Spread the topgallants—oh, lay them out lustily!
  What though it darken o'er Netherby Combe?
'Tis but the valley wind, puffing so gustily -
  On for the Warner and Hayling and Home!

'Bo'sun, O Bo'sun, just see the long slope of it!
  Culver is there, with the cliff and the light.
Tell us, oh tell us, now is there a hope of it?
  Shall we have leave for our homes for to-night?'

'Tut, the clack of them! Steadily! Steadily!
  Aye, as you say, sir, they're little ones still;
One long reach should open it readily,
  Round by St. Helens and under the hill.

'The Spit and the Nab are the gates of the promise,
  Their mothers to them—and to us it's our wives.
I've sailed forty years, and—By God it's upon us!
  Down royals, Down top'sles, down, down, for your lives!'

A grey swirl of snow with the squall at the back of it,
  Heeling her, reeling her, beating her down!
A gleam of her bends in the thick of the wrack of it,
  A flutter of white in the eddies of brown.

It broke in one moment of blizzard and blindness;
  The next, like a foul bat, it flapped on its way.
But our ship and our boys! Gracious Lord, in your kindness,
  Give help to the mothers who need it to-day!

Give help to the women who wait by the water,
  Who stand on the Hard with their eyes past the Wight.
Ah! whisper it gently, you sister or daughter,
  'Our boys are all gathered at home for to-night.'

THE INNER ROOM

It is mine—the little chamber,
  Mine alone.

I had it from my forbears
  Years agone.
Yet within its walls I see
A most motley company,
And they one and all claim me
  As their own.

There's one who is a soldier
  Bluff and keen;
Single-minded, heavy-fisted,
  Rude of mien.
He would gain a purse or stake it,
He would win a heart or break it,
He would give a life or take it,
  Conscience-clean.

And near him is a priest
  Still schism-whole;
He loves the censer-reek
  And organ-roll.
He has leanings to the mystic,
Sacramental, eucharistic;
And dim yearnings altruistic
  Thrill his soul.

There's another who with doubts
  Is overcast;
I think him younger brother
  To the last.
Walking wary stride by stride,
Peering forwards anxious-eyed,
Since he learned to doubt his guide
  In the past.

And 'mid them all, alert,
  But somewhat cowed,
There sits a stark-faced fellow,
  Beetle-browed,

Whose black soul shrinks away
From a lawyer-ridden day,
And has thoughts he dare not say
  Half avowed.

There are others who are sitting,
  Grim as doom,
In the dim ill-boding shadow
  Of my room.
Darkling figures, stern or quaint,
Now a savage, now a saint,
 Showing fitfully and faint
  Through the gloom.

And those shadows are so dense,
  There may be
Many—very many—more
  Than I see.
They are sitting day and night
Soldier, rogue, and anchorite;
And they wrangle and they fight
  Over me.

If the stark-faced fellow win,
  All is o'er!
If the priest should gain his will
  I doubt no more!
But if each shall have his day,
I shall swing and I shall sway
In the same old weary way
  As before.

THE IRISH COLONEL

Said the king to the colonel,
'The complaints are eternal,
  That you Irish give more trouble
    Than any other corps.'

Said the colonel to the king,
'This complaint is no new thing,
  For your foemen, sire, have made it
    A hundred times before.'

THE BLIND ARCHER

Little boy Love drew his bow at a chance,
  Shooting down at the ballroom floor;
He hit an old chaperone watching the dance,
  And oh! but he wounded her sore.
    'Hey, Love, you couldn't mean that!
    Hi, Love, what would you be at?'
      No word would he say,
      But he flew on his way,
For the little boy's busy, and how could he stay?

Little boy Love drew a shaft just for sport
  At the soberest club in Pall Mall;
He winged an old veteran drinking his port,
  And down that old veteran fell.
    'Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!
    Hi, Love, what would you be at?
      This cannot be right!
      It's ludicrous quite!'
But it's no use to argue, for Love's out of sight.

A sad-faced young clerk in a cell all apart
  Was planning a celibate vow;

But the boy's random arrow has sunk in his heart,
  And the cell is an empty one now.
    'Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!
    Hi, Love, what would you be at?
      He is not for you,
      He has duties to do.'
'But I AM his duty,' quoth Love as he flew.

The king sought a bride, and the nation had hoped
  For a queen without rival or peer.
But the little boy shot, and the king has eloped
  With Miss No-one on Nothing a year.
    'Hey, Love, you couldn't mean that!
    Hi, Love, what would you be at?
      What an impudent thing
      To make game of a king!'
'But I'M a king also,' cried Love on the wing.

Little boy Love grew pettish one day;
  'If you keep on complaining,' he swore,
'I'll pack both my bow and my quiver away,
  And so I shall plague you no more.'
    'Hey, Love, you mustn't do that!
    Hi, Love, what would you be at?
      You may ruin our ease,
      You may do what you please,
But we can't do without you, you dear little tease!'

A PARABLE

The cheese-mites asked how the cheese got there,
  And warmly debated the matter;
The Orthodox said that it came from the air,
  And the Heretics said from the platter.

They argued it long and they argued it strong,
  And I hear they are arguing now;
But of all the choice spirits who lived in the cheese,
  Not one of them thought of a cow,

A TRAGEDY

Who's that walking on the moorland?
  Who's that moving on the hill?
They are passing 'mid the bracken,
But the shadows grow and blacken
  And I cannot see them clearly on the hill.

Who's that calling on the moorland?
  Who's that crying on the hill?
Was it bird or was it human,
Was it child, or man, or woman,
  Who was calling so sadly on the hill?

Who's that running on the moorland?
  Who's that flying on the hill?
He is there—and there again,
But you cannot see him plain,
  For the shadow lies so darkly on the hill.

What's that lying in the heather?
  What's that lurking on the hill?
My horse will go no nearer,
And I cannot see it clearer,
  But there's something that is lying on the hill.

THE PASSING

It was the hour of dawn,
   When the heart beats thin and small,
The window glimmered grey,
   Framed in a shadow wall.

And in the cold sad light
   Of the early morningtide,
The dear dead girl came back
   And stood by his bedside.

The girl he lost came back:
   He saw her flowing hair;
It flickered and it waved
   Like a breath in frosty air.

As in a steamy glass,
   Her face was dim and blurred;
Her voice was sweet and thin,
   Like the calling of a bird.

'You said that you would come,
   You promised not to stay;
And I have waited here,
   To help you on the way.

'I have waited on,
   But still you bide below;
You said that you would come,
   And oh, I want you so!

'For half my soul is here,
   And half my soul is there,
When you are on the earth
   And I am in the air.

'But on your dressing-stand
   There lies a triple key;

Unlock the little gate
  Which fences you from me.

'Just one little pang,
  Just one throb of pain,
And then your weary head
  Between my breasts again.'

In the dim unhomely light
  Of the early morningtide,
He took the triple key
  And he laid it by his side.

A pistol, silver chased,
  An open hunting knife,
A phial of the drug
  Which cures the ill of life.

He looked upon the three,
  And sharply drew his breath:
'Now help me, oh my love,
  For I fear this cold grey death.'

She bent her face above,
  She kissed him and she smiled;
She soothed him as a mother
  May sooth a frightened child.

'Just that little pang, love,
  Just a throb of pain,
And then your weary head
  Between my breasts again.'

He snatched the pistol up,
  He pressed it to his ear;
But a sudden sound broke in,
  And his skin was raw with fear.

He took the hunting knife,
   He tried to raise the blade;
It glimmered cold and white,
   And he was sore afraid.

He poured the potion out,
   But it was thick and brown;
His throat was sealed against it,
   And he could not drain it down.

He looked to her for help,
   And when he looked—behold!
His love was there before him
   As in the days of old.

He saw the drooping head,
   He saw the gentle eyes;
He saw the same shy grace of hers
   He had been wont to prize.

She pointed and she smiled,
   And lo! he was aware
Of a half-lit bedroom chamber
   And a silent figure there.

A silent figure lying
   A-sprawl upon a bed,
With a silver-mounted pistol
   Still clotted to his head.

And as he downward gazed,
   Her voice came full and clear,
The homely tender voice
   Which he had loved to hear:

'The key is very certain,
   The door is sealed to none.

You did it, oh, my darling!
   And you never knew it done.

'When the net was broken,
   You thought you felt its mesh;
You carried to the spirit
   The troubles of the flesh.

'And are you trembling still, dear?
   Then let me take your hand;
And I will lead you outward
   To a sweet and restful land.

'You know how once in London
   I put my griefs on you;
But I can carry yours now -
   Most sweet it is to do!

'Most sweet it is to do, love,
   And very sweet to plan
How I, the helpless woman,
   Can help the helpful man.

'But let me see you smiling
   With the smile I know so well;
Forget the world of shadows,
   And the empty broken shell.

'It is the worn-out garment
   In which you tore a rent;
You tossed it down, and carelessly
   Upon your way you went.

'It is not YOU, my sweetheart,
   For you are here with me.
That frame was but the promise of
   The thing that was to be -

'A tuning of the choir
  Ere the harmonies begin;
And yet it is the image
  Of the subtle thing within.

'There's not a trick of body,
  There's not a trait of mind,
But you bring it over with you,
  Ethereal, refined,

'But still the same; for surely
  If we alter as we die,
You would be you no longer,
  And I would not be I.

'I might be an angel,
  But not the girl you knew;
You might be immaculate,
  But that would not be you.

'And now I see you smiling,
  So, darling, take my hand;
And I will lead you outward
  To a sweet and pleasant land,

'Where thought is clear and nimble,
  Where life is pure and fresh,
Where the soul comes back rejoicing
  From the mud-bath of the flesh

'But still that soul is human,
  With human ways, and so
I love my love in spirit,
  As I loved him long ago.'

So with hands together
  And fingers twining tight,

The two dead lovers drifted
  In the golden morning light.

But a grey-haired man was lying
  Beneath them on a bed,
With a silver-mounted pistol
  Still clotted to his head.

THE FRANKLIN'S MAID
(From 'The White Company')

The franklin he hath gone to roam,
The franklin's maid she bides at home;
But she is cold, and coy, and staid,
And who may win the franklin's maid?

There came a knight of high renown
In bassinet and ciclatoun;
On bended knee full long he prayed -
He might not win the franklin's maid.

There came a squire so debonair,
His dress was rich, his words were fair.
He sweetly sang, he deftly played -
He could not win the franklin's maid.

There came a mercer wonder-fine,
With velvet cap and gaberdine;
For all his ships, for all his trade,
He could not buy the franklin's maid.

There came an archer bold and true,
With bracer guard and stave of yew;
His purse was light, his jerkin frayed -
Haro, alas! the franklin's maid!

Oh, some have laughed and some have cried,
And some have scoured the countryside;
But off they ride through wood and glade,
The bowman and the franklin's maid.

THE OLD HUNTSMAN

There's a keen and grim old huntsman
  On a horse as white as snow;
Sometimes he is very swift
  And sometimes he is slow.
But he never is at fault,
  For he always hunts at view
And he rides without a halt
    After you.

The huntsman's name is Death,
  His horse's name is Time;
He is coming, he is coming
  As I sit and write this rhyme;
He is coming, he is coming,
  As you read the rhyme I write;
You can hear the hoofs' low drumming
    Day and night.

You can hear the distant drumming
  As the clock goes tick-a-tack,
And the chiming of the hours
  Is the music of his pack.
You may hardly note their growling
  Underneath the noonday sun,
But at night you hear them howling
    As they run.

And they never check or falter
For they never miss their kill;
Seasons change and systems alter,
But the hunt is running still.
Hark! the evening chime is playing,
O'er the long grey town it peals;
Don't you hear the death-hound baying
At your heels?

Where is there an earth or burrow?
Where a cover left for you?
A year, a week, perhaps to-morrow
Brings the Huntsman's death halloo!
Day by day he gains upon us,
And the most that we can claim
Is that when the hounds are on us
We die game.

And somewhere dwells the Master,
By whom it was decreed;
He sent the savage huntsman,
He bred the snow-white steed.
These hounds which run for ever,
He set them on your track;
He hears you scream, but never
Calls them back.

He does not heed our suing,
We never see his face;
He hunts to our undoing,
We thank him for the chase.
We thank him and we flatter,
We hope—because we must -
But have we cause? No matter!
Let us trust!